A new race of the Naked-faced Spider-hunter *(Arachnothera clarae)* from Luzon

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The Naked-faced Spider-hunter (*Arachnothera clarae*) is an endemic Philippine species. There was confusion in the earlier literature concerning the correct name of this species; *clarae* evidently has priority. Rand in his recent revision of the Nectariniidae for Peters' *Check-list of Birds of the World* (1967, 12, Cambridge, Mass.) and in his earlier papers with Rabor (1957, *Fieldiana: Zoology*, 42: 13–18; 1960, *Fieldiana: Zoology*, 35: 225–441) recognized three races: an eastern Mindanao population, *A. c. clarae* Blasius; a central and western Mindanao one, *A. c. malindangensis* Rand and Rabor; and one from Samar and probably Leyte, *A. c. philippinensis* Steere. The two Mindanao populations differ chiefly or only in colour. *Arachnothera clarae philippinensis* is unique in having a naked forehead and a wash of green on the underparts.

Samar and Leyte birds have sometimes been considered a separate species on the basis of their naked foreheads but the discovery of a Luzon population, described below, with forehead feathered like the Mindanao birds makes it unlikely that more than one species is involved, since the population with naked forehead is geographically between those in which that area is feathered.

The Luzon race of this spider-hunter was discovered during our work on that island with the Bird Banding Project. We name it:

Arachnothera clarae luzonensis, subsp. nov.

Type: No. 4133, Philippine National Museum; adult male; Dumagat, Pakil, Laguna, Luzon, Philippines; 25th May, 1966; collected by M. Celestino and J. Ramos.

Diagnosis: Forehead feathered. Differing from the Mindanao forms by having the back more brownish and the grey-brown of the breast darker. There seems to be no size difference.

Description: The type has the bill long, curved and pointed and burnt umber to black in colour; crown and back drab olive-green, tending to brownish on the rump, and to raw sienna on the tail; decomposed edges of the primaries and secondaries ochraceous yellow, tending to brown in the middle and buff on the inner edges; area behind the wing-bend brown; naked skin on the face flesh coloured; chin and throat grey, touched with brown; breast feathers edged with grey and with brown shafts and light brown tips to give a mottled appearance; vent and under tail-coverts light brown washed with olive; flanks olive grey; legs light brown, feet vandyke brown.

Measurements of the type: Total length 159 mm. wing 85, tail 46, culmen from gape 45, culmen from back edge of nostril 32, tarsus 22.

Material: Two specimens other than the type are in the Museum's collection: NMO 4134 from Balian, Laguna, collected 9th June, 1965 by N. Icarangal, and NMO 4135 from the type locality. Both specimens are juvenal females. They differ from the type by having the plumage generally darker.

Habitat: Found in virgin forest and in clearings planted with bananas and abaca. They seem to rest in the forest, where they are hard to see

among the foliage. They descend to feed on the banana or abaca inflorescenes. According to the natives they have been seen in the lowlands among coconut groves, where they feed among the flowers.

Oxpeckers *Buphagus* spp. on game animals at night

by R. J. Dowsett

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INTRODUCTION

The two species of oxpecker, the Yellow-billed *Buphagus africanus* Linn. and the Red-billed *B. erythrorhynchus* (Stanley), feed entirely on ticks and flies on the hides of game and domestic animals or on wounds on these animals. Oxpeckers also sun themselves and copulate on the bodies of their hosts, and line their nests with their hair. Discussion is to be found in Attwell (1966) and Moreau (1964). What apparently has not been appreciated hitherto is that the symbiosis exhibited by these birds is even more extensive in that some oxpeckers at least roost on their hosts at night.

Previous authors have mentioned that oxpeckers roost colonially in trees, holes in trees and reed beds (*e.g.* McLachlan and Liversidge, 1957 and van Someren, 1951). However, in July 1966 I received a report from two colleagues in the Zambia Game Department, W. R. Bainbridge and R. D. Rohwer Junr., of oxpeckers on buffalo *Syncerus caffer* Sparrman at night. This was near M'fuwe in the Luangwa Valley National Park in Zambia, about 13° 03′ S., 31° 47′ E., and was at about 0300 hours on a pitch black night. The species of oxpecker was not determined and unfortunately the behaviour of the birds was not noted, as the observers did not realise the value of this record. Consequently I have searched specially for oxpeckers on game animals at night in the Luangwa Valley National Park and adjacent areas.

OXPECKER NOCTURNAL HOST PREFERENCES

Between August 1966 and December 1967 I observed oxpeckers frequently on buffalo at night but never on other game animals. On all but one occasion that I was able to identify the oxpeckers specifically they were *B. africanus*. The one record of *B. erythrorhynchus* was of two birds, and at least ten others unidentified, on a large herd of buffalo in August 1966. By day *B. africanus* is much the commoner species on buffalo in the Luangwa Valley (personal observation, and see Attwell, 1966). I have never found nor heard of oxpeckers roosting in trees in that area, although they may do so unnoticed.

The bulk of the oxpeckers in the Luangwa Valley are to be found by day on buffalo, hippo *Hippopotamus amphibius* Linn., black rhino *Diceros bicornis* Linn., zebra *Equus burchelli* Gray, impala *Aepyceros melampus* Lichtenstein and kudu *Tragelaphus strepsiceros* Pallas. Of these species more than 20% of the groups encountered by day will have oxpeckers in attendance. Buffalo, hippo and impala are the only ones to be seen commonly at night; hundreds of each species have been observed, but oxpeckers have been found only on buffalo. It should be noted that the many oxpeckers that utilise the abundant hippo and impala are nearly all *B. erythrorhynchus*. The host preferences of the two species of oxpecker are not fully understood (Attwell, 1966 and Dowsett, in prep.), but possibly